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ABSTRACT

The major vocational education research needs in North Carolina in the 1980s should represent the major research areas in other states. Research issues will fall into four major areas: policy, planning, finance, and citizen participation. If no appropriate state policy on vocational education is in place, an appropriate one must be established and an organizational arrangement to implement it must be developed. A review of the planning process should address three fundamental questions: (1) What is needed to establish a better method for job forecasting? (2) What is required to assure effective teachers and appropriate curriculum guides? and (3) Does planning focus on the student? Finance inquiry should investigate a basic funding formula to sustain programs in the future and a "weighted formula" to service the disadvantaged and the handicapped. Aspects of citizenship participation that need study are citizen views of the effectiveness of vocational education and advisory councils. For any research efforts to have appreciable impact on a state's educational policy, the state must have a commitment to research, and previous research should have been used to improve programs. (YLB)

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STATE LEVEL PERSPECTIVES ON RESEARCH PROGRAMMING FOR THE 1980's: A NORTH CAROLINA VIEW

by

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E. M. L.
July 19, 1982

STATE LEVEL PERSPECTIVES ON
RESEARCH PROGRAMMING FOR THE 1980's:
A NORTH CAROLINA VIEW

North Carolina is the tenth largest State in terms of population, 5.8 million according to the 1980 Census. The State is one of the original "Thirteen Colonies" and is bounded on its east by the Atlantic Ocean and on its west by the Appalachian Mountains, sometimes called the Blue Ridge. The State is about six hundred (600) miles long--east to west--and three hundred fifty (350) miles wide--north to south. The State has a large number of small villages and towns, with the largest urban center having about three hundred thousand (300,000) in population.

Between 1980 and the year 2000 the State is expected to add 1.3 million persons, reaching a population of 7 million. The twenty-three percent (23%) increase will be due primarily to people entering from outside the State. In fact, between 1980 and 2000, sixty-one percent (61%) of the growth will be due to migration and much of the population growth will occur in and around towns under fifty thousand (50,000) people.

The State's population will be aging. The number of elderly people is expected to rise from six hundred thousand (600,000) in 1980 to nine hundred thousand (900,000) in 2000, an increase of fifty percent (50%). Also, the State has one of the highest female labor force rates in the nation. Over one-half of all wives and mothers are in the labor force. On the other hand, eighty percent (80%) of the working women are now in low-paying jobs, compared to forty-five percent (45%) of the men.

As to education and skill training, the State's school age population is decreasing and the decline is projected over the next two decades. The State's share of expenditures for elementary and secondary education has declined from forty-nine percent (49%) of the State's General Fund to the current forty-four

percent (44%), while at the same time the local share has been increasing. This contrasts with the national trend which shows states assuming a greater share of support for education. On the other hand, the State's total expenditure for all of education--kindergarten through university--represents sixty-five percent (65%) of the General Fund.

In the last six years about $8 billion worth of new and expanding industries have been announced. It is expected that this expansion will produce one hundred fifty thousand (150,000) new jobs before 1984. Through the year 2000, the State is expected to add nine hundred thousand (900,000) jobs, nearly ninety percent (90%) outside of manufacturing and agriculture.

North Carolina is now poised for its Quadricentennial. The year 1585 was the time of the first attempt to colonize the "New World" by English-speaking people. On the eve of its Four Hundredth Anniversary, the State is now 1) considered a part of the "Sun Belt", 2) cited as one of the best places to live in the nation, and 3) has a "balanced" State budget; yet, the State has a long history of support for education and training.

While North Carolina is unique, the major research needs in this State should represent the major research areas in other States. Since State research in the 1960's and 1970's did not address the underlying issues, identifying the critical research questions for the 1980's is essential. The research issues for the 1980's will fall into four (4) major areas: 1) Policy; 2) Planning; 3) Finance; and 4) Citizen Participation.

Policy. Much has been written or said about a national policy on vocational education. Little, however, has been accomplished toward this end. (If the current Federal Administration has its way, nothing is likely to be done at the federal level.) Until recently, there was little discussion about a policy on vocational education for the various States. That may be the key

research issue for most States in the 1980's. Questions to be researched are:

- Does the State have an overall state policy on vocational education; if not, what are the elements necessary in order to establish one?
- Is vocational education a legitimate part of the State's educational process; that is, are there specific statutory references in the State's education code in regard to its purposes and goals?
- Is there any adequate definition; at what grade level may the subject be taught; what kind of articulation is required among and between the various educational levels and institutions?

Once a "clearer" State policy is established through appropriate research (and action by the State Assembly), the next major issue for the States in 1980 is: Does the State have the appropriate organizational arrangement to implement its policy? Major subquestions may be:

- Should vocational education be directed by a single/sole State Board; or by more than one Board?
- If other State agencies do offer vocational education, what is the State's policy in regard to overlap, duplication, and program evaluation?

In other words, central research policy issues for the 1980's are: Is there an appropriate State policy on vocational education in place? If not, what is the appropriate State policy and what kind of organizational arrangement is necessary to implement it?

Some States have undertaken to seek-answers to these kinds of questions. Recently, the Advisory Council in Maryland and North Carolina completed such policy research studies. Texas, by order of its Legislative Body, has such a policy study underway. Policy inquiry should be undertaken, especially if a State expects to establish or keep vocational education as an essential component of the education enterprise. Also, if a State is able to establish a policy for vocational education, it should include the kind of planning, the kind of financial support, and the kind of citizen participation which will be needed in order to achieve the State's goals and objectives.

Planning. Planning is a long-standing activity in all States. The current evidence implies that planning is a compliance activity for federal purposes. Have these requirements made a difference in program quality or availability in the States? If not, what approach should a State take to enhance its planning process? Shouldn't a State have its own planning process (beyond the federal mandate)? If so, what components are necessary to develop a desirable plan?

Of necessity, a review of the planning process should address at least three fundamental questions:

Question One. What is needed in order to establish a better method of job forecasting?

In most States, even with the SOICC (State Occupational Information Coordinating Committee) and the ESC (Employment Security Commission), there is a continuing call for better data. In response to this need, the Governor of the State of North Carolina recently created an Oversight Committee for Official Labor Market Information. The Committee is to help answer the critical question: "What skills do I need to learn to get a job that pays well and offers a good future," said the Governor. This is the critical issue for all States: How can the school be sure that the training is adequate for the workers of tomorrow? This is especially difficult to determine for the elementary and secondary schools, where students are beginning to make early vocational choices. That is why "guidance" has become so important in a State's planning strategy. Will the research in the 1980's assist in finding solutions to the often indicted guidance field or will the literature of the 1990's contain the same refrain of the 1970's; that "guidance is one of the weakest elements in most schools?"

Question Two. What is required to assure effective teachers and appropriate curriculum guides?

In order to offer adequate and quality programs, two elements are essential--a good teacher and a good curriculum guide and/or text. Does the State have a plan for recruiting and training prospective teachers/educators? Is it well-defined and well-developed? Does the State adequately prepare its teachers? Or, has the preparation (pre-service and in-service) grown like topsy without planning? What are the right elements of a professional development plan for teachers? A review of the teacher education situation in most States is cause for concern and it is an area of inquiry for the 1980's.

One of the weakness planning elements in most States is how teachers for specific fields are recruited, trained, and evaluated. Also, the relationships between the State Board(s) responsible for establishing criteria for teachers and teacher training institutions need careful study in most States. Even in those States where research has identified vocational teacher education as a critical area of need, too often little is done to improve the situation. Consequently, a critical State research need in the 1980's will be to determine: What constitutes a good vocational education teacher; what institutions/agencies have the capacity to prepare them; and how will teachers be evaluated and retrained? A related question is: Does State certification provide an assurance that a teacher will be "good"; conversely, does the certification process weed out incompetent instructors? The complex process of being certified to teach may now be counterproductive, even though certifying teachers for public

and private schools is a long practice and a legal requirement in most States. Certification is required at the post-secondary and adult levels in some States, while in other States certification beyond high school is not required. Which practice is desirable? The process of certification needs review by the States in the 1980's.

When teachers are employed, it is expected that they are prepared to teach. Various aides (human and instructional) are useful for effective teaching. Perhaps the most essential is the subject text and/or curriculum guide. How are State texts selected? How are the curriculum guides developed? There are several approaches to curriculum development. Is the current approach effective? Have other approaches been considered? What are the essential components of a curriculum development strategy in a State? States will need to research these questions in the 1980's.

Question Three. Does planning focus on the student?

Essential to all planning, to all research, is the benefit to the student. As States plan for the future, the improved use of facilities and staff will be the order-of-the-day. Questions about what is a "school" or a "school day" will need thoughtful review. Are there other environments in which students may be "educated", other than the traditional school? Good teachers and curriculum guides and flexible school schedules should all be for the benefit of the student. But, in planning for research, is the student considered? How often is the student the focus of the research effort? If the effort does not directly or indirectly benefit the student, then the research effort should be reconsidered.

Much effort is put forth to extol the merits of Vocational Student Organizations (VSO's). While it is widely held that VSO's do benefit students, what research is available that prescribes and describes the benefits to students? In the 1980's, impact research of this type will be needed in order to improve the overall planning of programs at the State level.

Finance. Education is a federal concern, a State responsibility, and a local function. In terms of educational finance, each level currently participates in a significant manner. While every State's financial support is based in law, tradition, and custom, there are some finance concerns which need State inquiry. One question is: What is the impact of federal funds on the programs in the State? The fact that State/local governments overmatch federal vocational education funds by as much as ten to one is often (and currently) being cited as evidence that States/locals do not need continuing federal support. Is this true? States need documented research to determine the impact of federal funds. Example, the North Carolina Advisory Council sought to ascertain what impact federal funds had had on constructing the Community College System. As of June 30, 1980, twenty-five percent (25%) of the construction funds had been provided through the Congress of the United States. Simply put, an equivalent of fifteen (15) of the State's fifty-eight (58) community colleges was financed with federal funds. Clearly, the often heard statement that federal funds count for little, that federal support is not beneficial to State programs is, in this instance, false. If the federal Congress is to be persuaded that federal education support is an essential component of national policy, States will have, of necessity, to prove the value/impact of the funds. Because of this reality, States may need to study its accounting procedure to determine whether the current practice provides "impact" information. As for vocational education

funds, States may desire to utilize State/local funds to "maintain regular programs", and use federal funds for this purpose "only when necessary."

The same basic issue is important to the use of State funds for vocational education. What is the State's policy on the use of State funds for vocational education (See Policy section)? Does the State appropriate specific funds for its vocational education purposes; or does the State provide a lump sum from which vocational education must make its case before a State Board or a Budget Office? The State that does specifically fund vocational education has one set of problems; a State that does not has another set of problems. What are the advantages and disadvantages of each system?

Finance research will be a critical area of inquiry in the 1980's. Finance inquiry should address some of the difficult and thorny questions such as:

- What kind of basic funding formula will sustain programs in the future? and
- What kind of "weighted-formula" is needed to serve the disadvantaged and the handicapped?

Any State that does not have a strong legal base, including finance, for vocational education in its statutes in the 1980's is on shaky ground.

Citizenship Participation. Without active citizen participation, it is unlikely that the education system will long survive. This belief was postulated early in the life of this nation, and it has stood the test of time. But, life in these United States is changing. Until recent decades, the school population was increasing. Now because the population is aging, many people no longer have direct ties to educational institutions. Due to this phenomenon, citizen participation becomes an area for inquiry for the 1980's.

Most people are aware that vocational education has extolled the relative merits of citizen participation, at least since 1917. How do people feel about the education programs in the State; do they measure up? What grade would parents

give the programs offered in your State? Last year in a national Gallup Poll, it was found that twenty-one percent (21%) of the parents gave vocational education a "D" or "F" in terms of the job it was doing for their children. What would be the results of a similar poll, State-by-State? It will become increasingly important to have the views of citizens in order to achieve the State's educational goals in the 1980's.

Another aspect of citizen participation which needs study in most States is advisory councils. Have councils contributed significantly to improve programs in the State; what impact have they had in bridging the world of education and work? If negative, how can the State improve the effectiveness of advisory councils? If a State maintains the position that citizen participation is beneficial, more research may be necessary in order to determine the combination of factors wich results in effective advisory groups.

Caveat. In any consideration of a State level perspective on research programming for the 1980's, two questions seem paramount: 1) What is the State's commitment to research and 2) How has previous research been used to improve programs? For education research, these questions should represent the bottom line. If the State lacks a commitment to research and if the previous research has not been utilized to improve programs, it is unlikely that the best research efforts in the 1980's will have any appreciable impact on a State's education program. In this situation, any study of the issues identified in this paper would have little or no chance of achieving the desired end result of improved programs for students.

Summary. States in 1980's will have many research issues to consider. These research activities can be grouped into four major areas: Policy, Planning, Finance, and Citizen Participation. While each of these areas of inquiry may

be addressed independently, these areas are interdependent on each other. A State level research program should, of necessity, study aspects of each area in order to formulate general findings which might give basic direction and overall support for future efforts.

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